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DRUNKENNESS

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The familiar process of the elimination of factors from a confused equation is bringing a new stage of progress and of hope in dealing with the form of delinquency which is most distinctive of the English-speaking nations. Until now the forces of alcoholism have nearly always been given the choice of weapons. Too often unreason and ill-restraint have been matched against their like, with the result of only further intrenching the hostile power.

The nature of the evil that goes with the harmful use of liquors is being analyzed. Such use is a vice; but it is not all a vice. It quickly becomes in large part a disease. The chemical effect of alcohol upon body and brain, certainly when taken in other than minute quantities, sets up a morbid condition and undermines self-control at a rate far more rapidly and to a far greater degree than even the enlightened conscience could anticipate. Alcohol gives wings to evil intention, sweeps the will far beyond where it had intended to go, and leaves it much less capable of recovery, than would any normal exercise of an evil choice—if the phrase may be allowed. It is impossible to study many cases of inebriety without reaching the clear conviction that though the inebriate does loosen the foundations of the tower which falls upon him, he can have had no remotely adequate conception of the burden with which he was to be crushed.

Such an approach to the subject may remind us that up to a century ago insanity was looked upon as nothing but a weird, dehumanized type of moral reprobation.

The beginning of humane and penetrating consideration for the insane came as it was understood that their condition was not an unconscionable one, and that the persistent and comprehensive application of remedial and hygienic methods could mitigate and sometimes bring to an end what had been thought to be a hopeless condition.

Today the thick and almost desperate fog of alcoholism—which often seems to penetrate all our minds and make us incompetent of incisive thought with regard to it—is being shot through by the thousand rays that are generated by the new convergence of science with sympathy. The results of this *Aufklärung* are beginning to show themselves in every one of the intricate and vexing complications with which the use of alcohol afflicts personality and civilization. This new light, in a sense, does not make the problem less difficult. It does not suggest that a less degree of concern than now exists with regard to it will be adequate. It rather indicates the need of larger resources and deeper devotion. But it gives assurance that there are concrete lines of action, which, if thoroughly followed out, will at no distant day bring profound and far-reaching gains.

The setting of alcoholism off by itself as a disease at once leads to a further step in the analysis. Fundamentally alcoholism is but the highly exaggerated expression of an antecedent morbid condition of the nervous system. Alcoholism gives such a condition scope and momentum which by itself it would never have. Alcoholism reacts upon the inner state, greatly intensifying it. But when all this has been allowed for, the underlying difficulty, which would exist apart from any alcoholic habit, is a trouble of the mind. This is the key-note in all treatment of alcoholic patients; and to the discerning practitioner it suggests that all the ingenuities of medical therapy must have their climax in a moral appeal to the sovereign will. The method would

seem to be to bring the machinery of human intelligence and co-operation to bear upon the super-effects of the man's fault, and after helping him clear away these, to bring the incitement for the better choice to his self-afflicted soul.

Along with a more inward knowledge of the nature of alcoholism has come a much more discerning measure of its social results. The whole system of laws covering the use and effects of alcoholic drinks seems to proceed from the possibility of violent crime committed by intoxicated persons. While judicious people have recognized alcohol as the source of many evils besides crimes of violence, they have been apt to turn from such consideration lest they should be classed with the fanatical temperance reformer. In effect, therefore, the new attitude towards the results of the abuse of alcohol is coming with a peculiar freshness of appeal to all sorts of people throughout the country. The direct results of the intoxicated state are now seen to represent only a minute fraction of the injury which is inflicted upon the community. Considering that all the serious phases of sexual immorality are involved deeply with intoxicating liquor, it is probably not too much to say that the specific tendency of human nature to throw the reins on the neck of its impulses by means of alcohol is responsible for a greater proportion of all the forms of degeneracy, including the birth of degenerate types, than all other causes put together.

A community so deeply alcoholized demands both to be studied minutely and exhaustively, and to be dealt with throughout from that point of view. It may be said that instead of such thorough diagnosis and any such statesmanlike program, we have had in the past only a sort of very determined application of exorcism; which has by no means been without its value, but could never touch the complication of keys that precipitate the

result and together can in the end prevent it. There is developing, under no centralized organization but with a keen community of interest, a comprehensive forward movement against the evils of alcoholism, which more or less consciously takes its suggestion from such a great public health campaign as that against tuberculosis.

In the first place, the treatment of individual cases of inebriety is being completely reconsidered and recast. Perhaps the best indication of this change may be given by an outline of the new system for the public treatment of drunkenness which has been developed by the State of Massachusetts during the past ten years.

Drunkenness associated with crime, vagrancy, or serious disorder continues to be punished in much the same way as before; but for alcoholism as a thing by itself there is a succession of three stages, all worked out from the new medical point of view with regard to drunkenness. Up to the number of two arrests in the course of a year, the young offender is dismissed the next morning after his arrest without being brought to trial. After that, on being arrested and brought to trial he is placed under probation in charge of a special officer of the court to whom he must report frequently, and who endeavors both to restrain and re-enforce him. If offences continue, a more definite punishment is felt to be needed, and a fine is imposed. The imposition of a fine, however, is not allowed to become equivalent to imprisonment. If the man is not able to pay his fine, his fine is made probationary. He is given a certain period under the charge of the probation officer in which to earn his fine. This procedure came about more easily when it was seen that to confine the drunkard who could not pay his fine was imprisonment not for drunkenness but in a sense for debt.

In due time, if the rake's progress continue, some form of institutional care becomes clearly advisable for the sake

not only of the man himself but of his family and of the community generally. At this stage comes the State Hospital for Inebriates at Norfolk. To this hospital men may either be committed by the courts, or, as happens now in three-fourths of the cases, they go voluntarily. The voluntary cases naturally have a decided advantage, as they come prepared to co-operate in their own treatment. In general this hospital is limited to men under forty years of age, or men who have not had a long history of alcoholism.

The Norfolk State Hospital has 1,000 acres of farm and wood land, and provides a variety of occupations in the open air the year round. There is in general a distinct feeling of loyalty on the part of the patients to the institution and its administration. While the system includes good food, productive work, and sound hygienic conditions generally, its chief reliance is upon a genuine personal relation between the physician and the patients, as they are called. The decisive effort on the part of the superintendent is gradually to gain the confidence of each man so as to be able finally to reach the skeleton in the closet; and there always is one—the sin, the sorrow, the indignity, the defeat—which is more or less consciously rankling at the centre of his being. The knowing physician, possessed of this secret through patient, unaffected fellow-feeling, can begin confidently to erect the scaffolding of a reconstructed life; and the man's soul, no longer transfixed within itself, begins to join gladly and with a sense of revelation in the labor. This, at any rate, is the history of a substantial proportion of cases.¹

¹Whether any of the various types of drug-treatment, for which so much is claimed, have any value, is a matter of doubt. In certain cases, drastic chemical action may for a short time restore the balance of nervous energy to the nerve centres, some of which have become congested, some atrophied. If the patient, during this interval, by summoning all his moral resources, can fasten his hold again upon a normal conception of life, he may have a favorable chance of recovery. But there can be little question that the best way to bring about and to confirm a sound moral perspective is through such all-around physical and moral hygiene as is practised under the Norfolk system.

After a stay of a few months the patient becomes acquainted with the after-care officer, also a physician, who, like the superintendent, chose his work for the love of it. He is put in possession of all the facts gained by the superintendent and his assistants with regard to the case. On the one hand, he proceeds to prepare the mind of the patient for going back into normal environment, and, on the other, he visits the man's family, his employer, his clergyman, and any helpful friends, so as to secure for him a reception that will be as conducive as possible to his welfare and progress. The after-care physician continues to visit each discharged patient for a period of months, so as to get for him the most out of every favoring influence.

Carefully collected statistics for the past five years show that twenty per cent. of the former patients have been completely abstinent, and another twenty per cent. have at least maintained a distinctly better standard of self-control than before their stay at the hospital. In due time it is to be hoped that in every community throughout the state there will be citizens who will be ready to take up the responsibility where the after-care physician leaves it. This would considerably reduce the number of those who return to the hospital a second or a third time; and it would—with the proposed development of a detention colony for confirmed cases where they should be kept under gentle constraint for life—effect a very marked decrease in the number of inebriates, which are so great a menace to nearly all communities.

These different stages of treatment, as worked out in a public experiment, no doubt represent broadly a method which will be adopted by private initiative. Certainly the probationary stage and the after-care stage challenge the study and aid of all responsible moral leaders in our local communities. They can in fact do much to raise the standard of intelligence and

training for the probation and parole service. In particular, the church has a distinctive opportunity; for the new developments in the treatment of alcoholic patients throw stronger emphasis than ever upon influences of religion, brought to bear in the light of psychological knowledge.

The two institutional stages, whether under public or private control, will however in large numbers of cases be a necessity. The hospital stage, aside from removing the inebriate from temptation, takes him out of the atmosphere made by those anxieties and importunities of undiscerning friends which seem only to fix the tendency more irrevocably. The detention colony stage, under humane direction, is clearly a mercy to all concerned.

The first step in any great public contest with disease is the care of the afflicted and the isolation of contagious cases; and be it remembered that in many subtle ways alcoholism is the central factor in a complication of infecting evils. The next step consists in the broadest, most exhaustive measures for removing liability to disease.

Here we need to aim directly at reducing those tendencies of mind and body which make easy victims for alcohol. It is one of the new principles of education that attention trained in one direction does not mean attention ready for application in every other direction. Attention must be trained to the specific subject. There must be an increasing number of persons on the staff of the churches, the schools, the charitable agencies, the specialized philanthropies, the secular benevolent associations, and perhaps, above all, the great manufacturing establishments, who shall for the prevention of intemperance urgently promote a varied, consecutive, comprehensive program for the care and enhancement of physical and moral vitality. No one who is at all

familiar with the growth of the system of social service in the large cities, but will recognize the great potencies which exist in it for the rearing up of a new generation which shall be distinctly less susceptible to alcoholic attack.² It cannot be taken for granted, however, that such a result will be gained and held in substantial degree unless every aspect of social reconstruction is under continuous experimental study with this precise end in view. In all the training of motherhood and the care of infant life, the medical inspection of children in the public schools, the preparation of children for appropriate vocations, the protection of adolescents against the peculiar and intense moral dangers that beset them, the organization of recreation for children and young people, and the guidance of their spiritual life—at every stage the program will provide that the specific tendencies towards alcoholism be specifically anticipated and intercepted. We may expect that the study of the psychology of alcoholism, which is proceeding rapidly in connection with curative efforts, will be constantly throwing back important clues for use in such preventive service.

The third phase of a wide and far-reaching public health campaign must be to remove so far as possible the chance of exposure to disease, to attack the provoking unit in all its dark lurking places. Alcohol has to all intents and purposes the same relation to the disease associated with it as have the germs of tuberculosis to the great white plague. It is true that the medium of alcoholism is appropriated voluntarily and that its dissemination is promoted under an enormously powerful business motive. But these facts do not affect the principle; they only complicate and baffle its application.

²There are some gratifying signs that organized industrial unrest, instead of dallying with alcoholism or assuming that it is a mere by-product of poverty, to be sloughed off by economic progress, is coming to recognize in it an intolerable obstacle to any working-class program.

Here too the method of patient, exhaustive analysis must be followed. The greater, more hurtful evils of the liquor trade must be set off by themselves, and separately disposed of. So much of the sentiment of the community as is ready and available for a single telling step must be organized for that step. As an instance of this policy, the so-called "bar and bottle" law on the Massachusetts statute book registered the conclusion that the sale of bottled whisky to the man who had already been drinking should not be permitted; and there is good reason for tracing to this law the lower rate in the increase of the figures for drunkenness in the state.

Perhaps the most striking fact in this connection is the changed attitude of the medical profession within very recent years as to the place of alcohol. Today the margin of utility or permissibility allowed by medical science to alcohol, whether as beverage or medicine, is narrowing almost to the vanishing point. On account of the psychological and ethical dangers involved, large numbers of men never previously committed to total abstinence are taking that position. Many of the foremost European scientists have become convinced abstainers and prohibitionists.

It seems not unlikely that practically all use of alcohol will be considered as producing the disease of alcoholism, and that within a generation the movement for the abolition of its public sale will be far advanced. To secure, to enforce, and to retain such a result will involve one of the most profound enterprises in moral organization and education which civilization has yet seen. Towards this great end every step in the struggle with any phase of the alcohol problem, even aside from its direct result, has its important contributory value. The final triumph will come when the man who has worked to protect his own home and neighborhood, the man who has resisted a danger to his own and his community's economic and

civic interests, begins to see that by universalizing such experience broad forms of prohibitory legislation and administration will become practicable and inevitable.

Each gain in the release of the individual from the fetters of the disease, in the community-prophylaxis that cuts down the number of the victims, in the restriction of the spread of the dangerous medium, means so much re-enforcement for the consummate victory. Underneath every sort of effort, however, should run the consciousness that the appetite for alcohol is but a blind outreaching for exaltation, for the fulfilment of life; and that so high a day of emancipation as that of the final release of the energies of a nation from alcohol can come only through opening up to the people all the avenues to more abundant life. The result so won will carry in itself the protection against any of the reactions that are sometimes threatened, and will have in it unexpected potencies for those other and further ends towards which social democracy is set. It is indeed not impossible that the movement against alcohol, with all its traditions of incoherence, may first exemplify the varied application of analytical social science gathered up into a "new synthesis," whose outcome shall be the equivalent of a revolution.